1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

551 Names were given to children very soon after birth. Names were frequently changed and given away. A man would receive his father's name 553 from the latter, or would take it after his death. If a child were sickly, a relative, such as a grandfather, sometimes gave him another name. A sick person sometimes also took a new name in order to recover. Renowned warriors sometimes gave away their names to young men. They might retain the same name for themselves, or take a new one. One very aged man gave away his name to a young man, telling him, "I give you my name in order that you may have as long a life as I." This was done without the occasion or accompaniment of a ceremony.

There seems to have been no prohibition against mentioning the name of the dead, nor even any reluctance on the matter. Some people, however, were ashamed to speak their own names.

551 Twins, called niiçan, were named, if boys, respectively Kaaen and Niiça[n]. 845 The latter name, however, was not always used, an ordinary name being given instead. Girl twins were not called by these names.

302 The hair was formerly worn in braids, as at present customary among the Plains tribes, but also erect over the forehead. The women wore their [765] hair either in braids or sometimes loose. In mourning, the hair, especially of the women, was cut about halfway across the cheek.

304 Ear-piercing, which among the Arapaho is performed on ceremonial occasions, and is itself accompanied with ceremony and giving of presents, was said among the Gros Ventre to be unaccompanied by special ceremonial actions. A woman or any one else does the piercing.

857 Boys who were herding horses sometimes took off their clothes and 673 daubed themselves with mud until they were unrecognizable. They painted their horses, and made shields of willow. Then they came to the camp, 868 mounted or on foot, to steal meat. Approaching the camp like a war-party, they would select the best meat hanging outdoors, charge on it, take it, and run. The old men and women and children chased them with clubs, but of course without success. The boys would go back to where they were herding, and have a feast.

576 The Gros Ventre say that both hand-shaking and kissing are aboriginal with them.

GAMES.

524 A common cup-and-ball game called tsöötskuutja[n] ("throw in") consisted of four hollow deer or antelope leg bones, each about two inches long, attached to a string passing through them, at the end of which there was a needle eight or ten inches long. This game appears to be identical with

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

CHAPTER VI

KINSHIP BEHAVIOR

Much of the more formalized behavior expected between particular categories of relatives among the Gros Ventres has survived the many changes in their economic, political, and religious structure. It is one of the few aspects of their older culture which can be observed as functioning at least partially. Although the economic side of the obligations has had to be reduced markedly under modern conditions, the attitudes accompanying avoidance and joking are still deeply ingrained in those of middle age and in older persons.

All in all, the type of behavior which indicated respect was extended to include by far the greatest number of relationships,—freedom being allowed only between those individuals considered to be related as grandparents and grandchildren, as siblings of the same sex, and as in-laws of opposite sex but of the same generation.

Parents

The parent-child relationship was characterized by a kind of reserve that tabooed any light talk, especially joking about sex or marriage. If the subject were approached in a serious way, however, it could be discussed between parent and child of like sex. A woman could, for instance, go to her divorced or widowed mother and tell her: "So-and-so wants you, will you not go and live with that man?" But she would not think of acting as intermediary in such a proposal to her father.

Throughout life children were supposed to address and to refer to their parents only by relationship terms,[1] never by personal name. Further, a son would be shamed by any incident even remotely connected with sex, in which he was involved, should it be

[1] The kinship terminology given by our informants agrees in detail with that in Kroeber, 1902, p. 9.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

has been given up, the Gros Ventres are so sunburned that their skin looks almost "black." Singer showed a small bag of red paint which she still had. She kept a piece of beaver castor in the bag so the paint would be sweet-smelling.

In the old days the Gros Ventres were early risers. Everyone got up while it was still dark, perhaps about three o'clock in summer and before seven in winter. It didn't make any difference whether a child might otherwise be favored, the rule was ironclad that all must rise early and that no one should lie abed. This applied to all—old people as well as to children.

One method of making sure that children would be strong was to take a beaver tail and slap the child on the hand and on the back while saying: "You will be good and strong." Mary, for instance, has seen her mother do this to all her grandchildren, hitting them so hard they almost cried. The beaver is considered a very strong animal since he cuts down big trees and drags them about.

Naming and Ear-piercing

Every individaul received a name shortly after birth. Many Gros Ventres, however, were, and are, known by names other than the original one. Names were changed for particular reasons, and in addition nicknames were frequently employed. Sometimes the first name was bestowed with considerable formality, but naming could be carried out in a variety of ways,[10] as the following examples show.

"Shortly after Coming Daylight was born, her father sent for his sister's husband and told him: 'Now I invited you to name your niece. I am giving you such-and-such kind of horse' (a bay, or a pinto, or whatnot). There was a big feast on this occasion and the lodge was full of people. The namer sat in the place of honor at the back of the lodge. He held the infant in his arms, told a war deed and said: 'Now I name her 'Taken A Prisoner.' Then he said a long prayer, starting with the usual formula, and wishing the infant a long life. He then handed the infant to the person to his left saying: 'Take Taken A Prisoner'; and so the infant was passed all around the lodge, each repeating the same to

[10] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 182.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

553 father had given him his own name, "Bear Teeth"; and in that of Ragged Robe's wife who gave her name to a little girl. In this latter case, at least, the woman continued using her own name.

Except in those cases where the name of a relative is given, as is seemingly the rule nowadays, the name must have some specific relation to either the war deeds or the medicine powers of the namer. Singer remarked that one time, when she had been very lucky in locating some weapons abandoned by the enemy, she was looking forward very much to naming a little relative "Finder" in connection with this exploit. Unfortunately, however, the child's father had already had a name for her so Singer was disappointed. A Pipe-Keeper, too, might name a child from something connected with the Pipe. Rufus Warrior, for instance, was named from the rawhide with which the Flat Pipe is wrapped; another child was called "Red Woman" from the fact that the wife of the Flat Pipe Keeper was always painted red,—even her hair. Al Chandler knows of two people his grandfather had named from objects in the Feather Pipe bundle.

The more formal the occasion, the more expensive the naming was for the family involved. If, for instance, advantage was taken of a public ceremony, not only was the one who gave the name recompensed by a valuable gift, such as a horse, but many other gifts would be given to various persons in the audience in order to honor the recipient of the name and to give prestige to his family. The expense was particularly heavy when a name was publicly bestowed upon an adult in recognition of bravery at war.[11]

431 727 554

551 Nearly everyone had a nickname. One of the most common was, and is, simply "Girl" or "Boy." Such a nickname often was acquired in early childhood because the name which had been bestowed was not liked,—and those names given through medicine often fell in that category. Coming Daylight said that she had not cared for the name given by a medicine man to her first-born son, so she had called him "Boy." The child died very young, and she now wonders if he would have lived longer had they used his real name. Nicknames may be acquired at any time of life and sometimes they are far from complimentary, especially those bestowed later in life by enemy-friends. If the nickname "takes" there is

[11] Cf. Chapter 5, p. 101.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

nothing the person can do about it. One of Singer's friends was called "Matter in the Ear" and another "Ugly or Homely." Another woman harped so much on an event which took place at Turtle River, that "Turtle River" became the name by which she was known, and most people forgot that her actual name was "Spotted Calf."

The piercing of the ears may be done at the same time as the naming, as apparently was done in the case of Coming Daylight, or might be done shortly thereafter. Singer, for instance, was named by Sitting High, but her grandmother on a different occasion pierced her ears. The parents might pay someone to do this, or a relative might volunteer. The sooner the ear-piercing is done the better, because the older the child is the more it may hurt. Singer said: "That ear-piercing goes either through a dream or through war deeds." In the former case, the dream is told and then the ears are pierced. In the latter case the person must relate a war story: "This is what I have done. . . ." The story has to be a true one concerning an incident wherein the enemy did not retaliate so the ears will heal up without any trouble.[12] The actual procedure, regardless of whether there is much formality or not, is as follows. An awl is used to pierce the ear and into the hole is inserted either a small splinter of rose-wood sharpened to a pin-point, or a porcupine quill. Whichever is used, it is greased before inserting and is left in until it falls out when the ear is healed. At this time is then inserted a small ring merely to keep the hole open. Fancy earrings are not worn by small children. Formerly boys' ears were pierced as well as girls'. The number of holes in each ear seems more or less arbitrary, but all are made on the same occasion. Coming Daylight has one in each ear; Singer has two; Coming Daylight's eldest son has three. The custom is now dying out as the present generation of mothers does not believe in it. Coming Daylight wanted to pierce the ears of her great-granddaughter but the child's mother said: "No. You will hurt her."

[12] Kroeber, 1908, p. 182 states that ear-piercing was said to be unaccompanied by special ceremonial actions.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

It was thought well, too, to name a child after someone who had attained advanced age. Thus it was that youths of 16 or 17 years of age would go out in a storm and stand before the lodge of some old man or woman and cry, begging the prayers of that person. Again, on a hunting party, should there be some old man along, unable to hunt, one member of the group might give a whole buffalo carcass to him; whereupon the grateful elder would offer a spontaneous prayer on the donor's behalf. Similarly, it was not at all unusual for successful young hunters to seek out old people to share in some of the spoils,—just as in these later times a bottle of whiskey was occasionally given to old persons by the young. Once in a while, too, some married man would have his wife cook a quantity of food and publicly invite old people, one of whom, in appreciation of this attention, would offer the expected prayer for the long life, health and success of the host and all the members of his household.

Dignity was, however, not necessarily an attribute of old age. With advancing years the conventions were somewhat relaxed. It was stated by one informant: "When a man had lived long enough to have participated in all the Sacred Dances, he had acquired the right to do almost as he pleased, including not having to observe so strictly the relationship taboos. It seemed to throw the bars down and he could have even more fun than ever at the expense of his enemy-friends and become still more vulgar and obscene." Relations between old women living together were not always harmonious and noisy quarreling was not unusual. Sometimes young boys played pranks on such old women, as in the following case.

"Two old women who were sisters shared a lodge. One day they were in there, seated back to back, warming themselves by the fire. They didn't have any clothes on and were feeling good, scratching their skins with sticks. Two young boys peeped in. They took a long willow and quietly heated the end of it in the fire. When the end of the willow was glowing, they touched one of the old women with it. She yelled at the other: 'You burned me,' and of course the other denied it. After a little while, the boys did the same thing to the other old woman. They heard her call out: 'What did you do to me? You burned me!' The boys

3: Cooper E-5 (1938-1940) 1957
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

784 Sex abstinence was generally observed before hunting, and par-
789 ticularly before and all during golden eagle trapping. Eagle
[834] trappers "had to have a special religious character, to observe certain food taboos, and a special way of handling [being handed?] a pipe." The leader of a war party, but not other members thereof, also observed sex abstinence.

Do not break leg bones or ribs to extract the marrow or for other purpose, inside the lodge or house; go outside to do it, else you will get sore legs, or your horses may break their legs. Cora Chandler stated in 1940 that she still observed this latter, as her folks had always made her do. If an embryo calf were to be taken out of the belly of a buffalo, the embryo's eyes had to be extracted before it was brought into the lodge to be cooked; if the eyes were taken out inside the lodge, a member of the family would go blind, —"and this has been proven." Likewise it was forbidden to butcher and extract the brains from a buffalo head inside a lodge, and also break off the "soft end" of roast buffalo ribs. "Never use a knife to fuss with ashes or coals because you might cut yourself if you did so."

After blood-letting, the subject abstained from eating anything fried so the cut would not turn blue.

[551] There does not seem to have been any prohibition against mentioning the name of a deceased relative or other person.

777 Coming Daylight and Mary Ereaux had never heard of lucky or
801 unlucky numbers. The Boy, however, stated: "According to the old law, the people were forbidden to use seven. For instance, a war party was not to have seven members, but either more or fewer. Cases are known in which young fellows disobeyed this rule and ran into trouble. In one case of this kind six of the party got killed and only one escaped with his life."